



This month's Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce "Business of The Month" award presented to *The Wasatch Wave*. The award was presented to Sue and Dick Buys (center) by Stephanie Webb (left) and LaVern Kocinski (right). The award is presented to businesses for their contributions to the community.

# Freedom of Information

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by Sharon Stockstill

The First Amendment. Without it, Americans would no longer be the "Land of the Free." The First Amendment offers Americans opportunities that are often denied in other countries. The founding fathers of America felt that the First Amendment was very important to American society, and it still plays an important role today.

The founding fathers thought the constitution, itself, didn't sufficiently protect people's liberties; thus, the First Congress of the United States proposed the Bill of Rights, which became an official part of the Constitution in 1791. The First Amendment gives Americans the right to practice any religion, the right to say or write whatever one pleases, the right for people to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

The U.S. Supreme Court stated in 1980, "In a variety of contexts this court has referred to a First Amendment right as a right to 'receive information and ideas.'" When composing the constitution, our founding fathers did not want laws similar to the old English Prior Restraint Law, which said nothing could be printed without church or state approval. The founding fathers felt Americans should have the right to receive information; therefore, they established the First Amendment. Thomas Jefferson said, "Our liberty depends on freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

Americans learn more about world governmental news than many foreigners, for instance, the recent shooting down of the Libyan "Bogie" plane by an American F-16. Americans received detailed information about the shooting, including actual video tapes of the encounter from our defense department. Americans deserve and demand the respect of knowing what their country is doing.

The rights stated in the First Amendment, such as freedom of expression, speech, press, religion, petition, etc., are critical to a democratic government. Without such freedoms, the people would not be able to make intelligent decisions, debate for better ways of governing, and state their grievances with the government; therefore, a government without freedoms stated in the First Amendment would not be a democracy, but a dictatorship. Our officials should always be questioned by the press, so they will be honest. And our government should always question the press so they, too, will be honest. It is a system of checks and balances, a system upon which our government was established, a system in which freedom flourishes.

In conclusion, the founding fathers found that the First Amendment was important in order to establish a democracy, and that is why the First Amendment is still important today. Americans, those bred on democratic ideals, need the institution of the First Amendment.